

MEMORANDUM

JCS REVIEWED 05-Oct-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION REFER TO OSD

OSD REVIEWED 02-Dec-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

SUBJECT: Briefing of Dr. Kissinger by General Vogt
of the Joint Staff

DATE: April 7, 1972

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Kissinger
General Haig
General Vogt
Colonel Carlson
Commander Howe

Dr. Kissinger: How is the weather?

General Vogt: It is bad - an overcast. There are now eight destroyers on line, four off the north and four off the south. The ones in the south are operating along Highway 1 down to Dong Ha. They are pouring out loads of fire and appear to be quite effective. However, the weather makes supporting difficult. The enemy is using a great concentration of armor and appears to be throwing everything they have into it. The ships to the north took a bridge, SAM sites and a road with a concentration of tanks under fire. Ten more destroyers are coming in between the 7th and 10th of April. All will be on the line by 12 April. The shortest range of the guns is eight miles but they can reach out further with rocket assisted projectiles. They can hit Quang Tri and substantially to the left of Route 1. We have identified loads of targets for these ships.

Dr. Kissinger: When will they start shooting in the north? They appear to be concentrating in the south now.

General Vogt: We are leaving it to their discretion when but it should be over the next several days. Three are due in on the

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7th and they should be able to do more about that time. I have a report that the line is still holding at the Cua Viet River and the tanks that they tried to float across are being contained. There is a heavy armor battle in progress and our destroyers are pounding away at them.

Dr. Kissinger: It appears to me that the Marines are in some danger.

General Vogt: We are concerned about Fire Support Base Nancy. Admiral Moorer called General Abrams and he called up to the area immediately. There is a skirmish in progress north of Nancy where some 30 men have been lost. If the enemy can extend its current bulge, we will be in serious trouble. General Abrams has taken off for MR-1 to make an assessment of the situation.

Dr. Kissinger: Does General Abrams understand he must sit on the military? There will be no awards for being friendly to General Vinh.

General Vogt: Yes. He is taking a personal look at the situation.

Dr. Kissinger: It seems to me that the Marine brigade is in danger and if we are not careful we are going to lose our reserves.

General Vogt: President Thieu wants them to hold on.

Dr. Kissinger: There were lots of crappy orders given in Laos.

General Vogt: General Abrams will be checking on this. There are no reports of attempts to push forces off Nancy. Naval gunfire will help the situation but we do need some air.

Dr. Kissinger: Who is our Air Force commander?

General Vogt: Lt. General Mickel is acting. The present incumbent is back here. As you know, the 13th (7th) Air Force commander was relieved and I believe you know the circumstances. (Acting Commander of 7th Air Force was Major General Winston T. Marshall)

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There were 143 tactical air strikes but most were on instruments.

Dr. Kissinger:

But the pictures I have seen on TV from Da Nang indicate the weather is better.

General Vogt:

It is better there but not further north.

Dr. Kissinger:

If we order attacks, where can you fly?

General Vogt:

The dry season is on the other side of the mountain range. This is the worst weather we could have expected. At Da Nang we have stationed two officers who are tied in with the Navy, ARVN and VNAF and U.S. air. They have direct lines to the battle area. The ground commanders are calling in requests and we are getting LORAN coordinates. All of the aircraft are being directed from this center and hitting enemy concentrations.

Dr. Kissinger:

Why can't we use B-52s?

General Vogt:

With dense weather it is very tricky.

Dr. Kissinger:

Why?

General Vogt:

Because they can't take the iron hand aircraft with them. They need 6,000 feet of clearance for evasion purposes and above 30,000 feet the aircraft can't function. We did get in some B-52 sorties. Six near Dong Ha, six to the west of Dong Ha and six others a little farther north. The aircraft are also dropping a whole series of bombs where they think personnel are infiltrated. This was going on intensely yesterday.

Dr. Kissinger:

You have a capacity for 51 B-52 strikes. Where did the other 38 go? Did 51 go yesterday?

General Vogt:

I think so. There were twelve in Laos and some in the tri-border area. If they didn't fly it was due to mechanical difficulties. They flew 314 tactical air strikes, 143 of these being in MR-1.

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Dr. Kissinger:

What about the others?

General Vogt:

They are already to go but a number of them are waiting for the weather to clear and therefore we lose the sorties. However, we have put all in the Kontum area that they need - some 50 sorties. Theoretically we should be able to fly every day but the weather is very difficult now.

Dr. Kissinger:

Yes, but they are building up ahead of steam politically. When you come to us in three weeks and say you are ready to fly, we may not be able to do it.

General Vogt:

I think we are flying now. The naval gun fire and tactical air is having an effect. Yesterday we had reports in MR-3 of an enemy attack near the Fishhook area. There was an attack by fire and an overrunning of a small base from which 143 people were evacuated. There were also some probes near the Haiphong area and some tactical air was used in that area. It is the 7th Air Force going in there. We may have a major battle developing there.

Dr. Kissinger:

When will the fourth carrier be there?

General Haig:

The latest we have is the 7th.

General Vogt:

The Central Highlands seems relatively calm.

Dr. Kissinger:

What is the weather outlook?

General Vogt:

We should have improved conditions within 36 hours.

Dr. Kissinger:

How about deeper in North Vietnam? Are we soaked over all the way north?

General Vogt:

May is the transition time for the change in monsoon. This is a variable period now. It appears to be solid from 700 to 30,000 feet. However, from noon to 7:00 p.m. the clouds are lower. Naval aircraft are flying on the wing of LORAN aircraft. I have been on the phone with the 7th Air Force and I have laid it on the line to them.

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Dr. Kissinger: We will pay a price. What about B-52s in North Vietnam?

General Vogt: I do not think we have identified any worthwhile targets yet. Once they get the SAMs out of there it will be worth the risk. SAC and the 7th Air Force feel the same way. Our opinion is that the targets are not worthy of B-52s.

Dr. Kissinger: Could you find better targets farther to the north?

General Vogt: The POL concentrations are not so scattered there. We could level Haiphong this morning.

Dr. Kissinger: Can you do it without endangering civilians?

General Vogt: Yes, we had it cleared out before. They finally gave up defending it.

It is encouraging that the ARVN is holding the line.

Dr. Kissinger: I am worried about them getting trapped.

General Vogt: General Abrams has been told to get with it. It is hard to run the war from Washington, hard to run it from D. C. I think the North Vietnamese are taking a grave risk. If we maul them, they would have taken a great risk.

Dr. Kissinger: But you have to understand the political situation.

General Vogt: Well we are getting naval gunfire in and hopefully the weather will break. The order has been issued to change the line to restrict bombing to 18 degrees north latitude. General Abrams knows. He has that.

Dr. Kissinger: I also believe it will be valuable to stop saying we are not flying because of weather. We just might want to take credit for our restrictions in bombing so everyone should shut up and just say we are reviewing the situation. No one should say they are waiting for better weather. They just shouldn't say anything except they are doing the best they can.

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General Vogt: It is difficult in Saigon. There are too many capable of talking to newsmen. Thirty-six hours is not before tomorrow our time.

Dr. Kissinger: Is that their best long-range forecast?

General Vogt: Weather is not an exact science. It is tough to predict.

Dr. Kissinger: We need different air planes.

General Vogt: The LORAN techniques we are currently using I personally put in when I was in charge out there.

Dr. Kissinger: We just appear to be having bad luck. We need to hit the North as soon and as massively as we can.

General Vogt: We are not just dropping these bombs in the dark. We have good control. Of course, if we can see, we can do better. If the enemy put 143 MIG strikes in, it would be a calamity to the ARVN so I am sure we are having an effect.

Mr. Kissinger: How can the enemy put a span across the river without us knowing about it?

General Vogt: It beats me. Perhaps they have some Soviet bridging equipment. Naval gunfire is going in after this bridge and there is fire going on along Route 1 at the tank concentrations. We will have three more destroyers within the next two days and they should all be in by the 10th or 12th. We are also moving 36 Marine A-4 squadrons to Da Nang.

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